



File Code: 2670

Date: December 2, 2021

Route To: File

Subject: Forest Order No. 05-15-00-21-24 – Camping Restrictions

From: Dean Gould, Forest Supervisor

This document explains my rationale and the regulatory basis for implementing a Forest Order prohibiting camping in one place for more than 14 days within any 30-day period on the Sierra National Forest. The Forest Order No. 05-15-00-21-24 will be effective from December 3, 2021, through December 2, 2023.

The purpose of this Forest Order is to promote public safety and the protection of natural resources by prohibiting long-term or semi-permanent occupancy of National Forest System Lands within the Sierra National Forest. With close proximity to the Fresno metropolitan area and greater Central San Joaquin Valley region, the demand for recreational opportunities are high, resulting in long-term occupancy in many locations within the National Forest. Developed and undeveloped camp sites often experience extended occupancy from forest visitors storing camping gear, personal property, and equipment to secure coveted camping areas. This causes conflict with other forest visitors and the “first come, first serve” approach to fair recreation. Homeless populations also contribute to this conflict year-round, by constructing makeshift dwellings, taking up residence and creating sanitation issues on the National Forest.

Areas that are occupied for extended periods of time often experience excessive soil compaction, and removal of vegetation and natural ground litter within riparian zones, all of which adversely impact critical habitat of sensitive and/or threatened species. Extended human occupancy may threaten resources when addressing basic necessities such as bathing, washing and removing water from adjacent natural waterways. Extended occupancy campers frequently remove brush and vegetation to clear camp sites and illegally cut and/or damage live trees in the process. Repeated accumulation of trash and human waste on a regular basis in specific locations diminish the vitality and quality of the land. Without periodical cycles of occupants vacating sensitive areas, the natural and managed restoration efforts of these areas are hindered.

Scoping efforts included discussions with California Land Management who concurred with the camping limits, and their effect on designated recreational sites. I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act. This action falls within the category identified in 36 C.F.R. § 220.6(d)(1) - prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety - and does not require documentation in a decision memo, decision notice, or record of decision. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this temporary closure. Implementation of the decision may begin immediately.



This Order includes an exemption for persons holding a Forest Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order (Form FS-7700-48). Authorization under this exemption will only be provided if I or my delegate determine that the risk to personal health and safety is reasonable considering the circumstances of the request. We may also require appropriate personal protective equipment and other necessary safety measures. I hereby delegate the authority to sign Form FS-7700-48 granting an exemption to this order to the District Rangers of the Sierra National Forest.